

*Shelboard, temp. Henry VIII. From Shaw's Ancient Furniture.*

## FURNITURE. By E. GUY DAWBER [F.].

Read before the Royal Institute of British Architects, Monday, 19th February 1906.

**F**URNITURE has been so exhaustively dealt with during the past few years in books, magazines, and newspapers, that it is difficult to approach the subject from any new standpoint. In the time at my disposal it is not possible to do more than briefly trace its development in England from the Middle Ages to the present day, and no attempt has been made to deal with it from the archæological or the collector's point of view. It has for most of us an interest beyond the mere appreciation of its beauty, and is so closely interwoven with the habits and customs of past ages, and so clearly exemplifies the manners and tastes of the time, that its interest is almost human. The carving and ornamentation of the various pieces, the skill with which they are constructed, and the materials of which they are made, all claim our careful study and regard.

Furniture for domestic use was generally made of wood, and, therefore, to attempt to follow the history and continuity of design throughout the Middle Ages is almost impossible owing to the scantiness of the material at our disposal; but from manuscript illustrations we find nearly all the examples down to the middle of the sixteenth century of an ecclesiastical character, or what we regard as such, though of course, like the architecture of that time, it was the mere vernacular in every-day use.

Throughout each successive period the style of the furniture followed that of the architecture, and if any special piece was required, the same craftsman who built the church, monastery or castle, made it, or at any rate had such control that in character and detail it assimilated with the building. A glance therefore at any ancient piece will enable us, from its construction, material, and detail, to tell the country and period to which it belonged.

Much furniture in these times—the Middle Ages—was of a permanent character, fitted into and forming part of the actual structure, and the remainder was confined to simple forms, such as stools, benches, chests, and tables, with heavier pieces in the way of buffets, cabinets, and presses. The same materials were used for making furniture as for fitting up the buildings, and so it comes about that certain furniture is invariably associated with a certain material. Furniture followed the evolution of architecture, and every change in one was reflected in the other; to trace, therefore, these changes in detail is to write the history of both.

Household furniture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was characterised by simplicity and stability of construction, and, as much of it had to be shifted from one castle to another when any great personage moved, its supply was necessarily limited, and rooms were consequently sparingly furnished. Great armouries and court cupboards formed the chief pieces in the halls of large establishments; stools and chests were the principal seats, and began as early as the fourteenth century to be fitted with upright backs and arm pieces—a survival of which is still occasionally seen in the old settles in country inns and farm-houses in the northern counties—Yorkshire and Westmorland especially. For a long period the craftsman was influenced by the architecture of the building, and he borrowed all required detail for his decoration from either the structure, metal-work, or textiles. In wrought-iron work especially, the locks, hinges, and handles of furniture were often marvels of skill.

Before tapestry became common in large houses the walls of rooms were often painted to imitate it, a style of decoration which lasted until the general introduction of panelling. Tapestry, from very early times, was used for the walls of superior apartments. It hung from a series of hooks under the ceiling down to the floor, and generally over the doors as well, being pushed aside when entering or leaving a room. Like most of the furniture of this period it was removable, and in large establishments one servant, called the “upholder,” was appointed to superintend its hanging.

For many years much of the manufactured pieces of furniture came from abroad, and for long afterwards the influx of foreign workmen from Italy and the Netherlands hindered the development of a distinctive and national taste; up to the close of the sixteenth century there was hardly a definite and decided tradition. After the design of furniture began to break through its ecclesiastical environment, when the Renaissance in Italy had developed in England, then we find a real national style gradually being evolved.

The most common kind of seats at this time were the “joyned” or framed stools, settles, and long benches. The tables, which a century previous were plain boards laid upon trestles, were now often richly carved with heavy turned and moulded legs, generally covered with elaborate embroideries, velvets, and satins, fringed and emblazoned with arms in silver and gold. The foot rails were important features in these old dining tables, as in the chairs, for they not only added much to their strength and rigidity, but they kept the feet from the damp rushes with which the floors were generally strewn. Chairs during all this period—the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries—were still scarce, and only found in the more prosperous households, and reserved for the heads of the family.

Gradually the furniture became richer, great cabinets of oak inlaid with ivory, ebony and other woods were frequent, and the common chests which for centuries past had been the general repository for articles of all kinds, now became highly ornamental.

At the end of the sixteenth century, when the use of plaster for decorative purposes was coming into use, nearly all rooms were panelled, and carving and inlay were often used.

At Hardwick Hall and Sizergh Castle in Westmorland, the rooms were panelled in oak inlaid with ebony and holly in geometric designs, a treatment adopted in a similar manner in the



OAK BEDSTEAD, ENGLISH : DATED 1593.

From Mr. F. S. Robinson's *English Furniture*. By permission of the publishers.

furniture of the period. Furniture generally was just feeling the Renaissance influence, and though its forms were severe and unyielding, and strongly tinged with architectural design and detail, yet in the houses of the wealthy, at any rate, the sumptuous hangings, tapestries,

damasks, and velvets, made up a picture of lavish display and colour, of which we can form but slight conception. Chairs in particular, though severe in form and outline, depended a great deal on carving for their effect, and pillows and cushions for comfort.

Practically all furniture in England at this period was made of oak, and though other woods were introduced by foreigners—the Flemish settlers, in particular, using ebony, walnut, cypress, and cherrywood—oak continued to be the favourite material. Perhaps the most constructively perfect period of English furniture was the end of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, and though it was based almost entirely on classical influences and detail, and the outlines may suggest extraneous origin, it retained a character essentially English, and soon lost any trace of foreign influence. The workmanship was of the best, the construction admirable, and framed in a manner calculated to withstand the roughest usage. The old court cupboard now becomes the elaborate cabinet, with folding doors below, recessed upper part and overhanging top, with turned and moulded pendants—the whole richly moulded, carved, and inlaid—often framed into the panelling and treated as a structural part of the room.

The chairs, whether arm or single, were framed with four, six, seven, and sometimes eight rails to the legs, the bottom ones close down on the floor—to enable the feet to be kept off the damp stones. As boarded floors came into fashion the front rails were raised or omitted, to give more freedom to the feet. All the horizontal pieces were tenoned into the uprights and pinned with oak pegs, and the whole put together with a degree of strength and rigidity truly wonderful, and admirably adapted to the material they were made of.

Many of the chairs, the arm ones in particular, were very elaborate, with carved backs, rails, and turned or moulded legs, with names, dates, and emblems cut upon them, the carving generally consisting of a series of interlacing or geometrical patterns, cut with a “parting” tool, or with a design outlined and sunk some sixteenth of an inch, and coloured.

Of the single chairs, the three kinds best known are the Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire types. The Yorkshire one shows the peculiar arched and cusped work, with the small turned pendants and shafts planted on the side rails. The Derbyshire chairs are very similar, from the seat downwards, but are differently treated in the backs. The cross rails are straight, and between them two or three arches are introduced, divided by neatly turned spindles, with split ones, as in the Yorkshire chairs, planted on the sides. This, indeed, is one very characteristic detail of the Jacobean period. Turned work, at first coarse and heavy, for table legs, balusters, and newels, &c., had been in use for years; and now small turned spindles in oak or ebony, with round or acorn-shaped terminations, were split and laid on the sides and rails, and turned drops were added below tables, chairs, and cabinets. The fashion was copied from abroad, as this treatment was common in France and the Netherlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The so-called Lancashire chairs, again, are somewhat like those of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, but the backs are generally higher and filled in at the top with a solid panel. Endless varieties were based on these models, and in all parts of the country widely varying designs are met with, though in the main lines they follow these types.

During the reign of Charles I., and indeed for many years previous, velvets, brocades, satins, and stuffs, had been imported from Venice and abroad, and much furniture from Italy as well as the Netherlands. Knole, in Kent, contains many Jacobean examples covered in their original material, and the peculiar X-shaped chairs, made specially for the visit of James I., covered with crimson silk velvet embroidered with gold, were doubtless based on Venetian models, although the type had been in use in this country for many years previous. The

Restoration in 1660 of Charles II., who brought with him a foreign wife and the manners and tastes of a strange court, caused a further influx of furniture and workmen from Holland, Flanders, Spain, and France; and to this we owe a great deal of the mixed character and



OAK INLAID COURT CUPBOARD, 1603.

From Mr. F. S. Robinson's *English Furniture*. By permission of the publishers.

diversity of style so prevalent in the latter half of the seventeenth century, indeed in many cases it is almost impossible to determine the nationality of the various pieces.

Up to this time, however, in England, chairs, tables, and cabinets were nearly always constructed with straight framings, the legs, stretchers, and rails were always straight, if we



except the furniture based upon Italian models. Towards the close of the century, the spiral twisted legs, adopted from Flanders, came into fashion, and the plain circular turned ones fell into disuse. Furniture gradually begins to lose its rigid lines; and the influence, sometimes grotesque, of the Dutch cabinet-makers becomes evident. The legs very slowly develop into well-defined knees, and become cabriole legs, which before this time had not been seen in England—a fashion which soon usurped the old square framed supports, and became universal. Though the old style of furniture lingered in country districts for nearly another fifty years, yet the character was entirely altered.

As a rule, at this early period, the backs of chairs were formed of a wide cut, and shaped centre splat, at first jar-shaped, and later pierced and carved, placed between side uprights and connected at the top by either a straight or shaped rail. The raised and elaborate top of Charles II.'s time sinks into simple curves, and the carved-oak period passes, never to return.

Carving, to a great extent, at this time—the beginning of the eighteenth century—was sparingly used, the tendency being towards greater lightness and grace of line in furniture. A delicate shell ornament was carved on the knee of the leg, the foot being sometimes modelled after a lion's or eagle's claw, and the wide curved and hollowed centre panel of the back was decorated with a shell at the top and delicately inlaid with marquetry.

Marquetry is one of the distinguishing characteristics of late Dutch seventeenth century furniture, and when treated in a quiet and simple manner was very pleasing; but although it became the fashion for some years in this country, and chairs, cabinets, clock cases, and indeed all surfaces, offered opportunities for the new style of decoration, it never took a firm root, and after a few years died out.

Furniture was often entirely veneered with walnut or mahogany, upon an oak or sycamore backing, and, although mahogany is said to have been discovered by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1595, it was only now being used in a tentative and experimental way.

In a paper of this sort it is hardly more than possible to touch upon the influences that gradually changed the styles of furniture in England; but, broadly speaking, it may be said to follow the contemporary architecture of the time, and in the eighteenth century this was so marked that many schools of craftsmen and cabinet-makers based their designs almost exclusively on the models of the leading architects of the day.

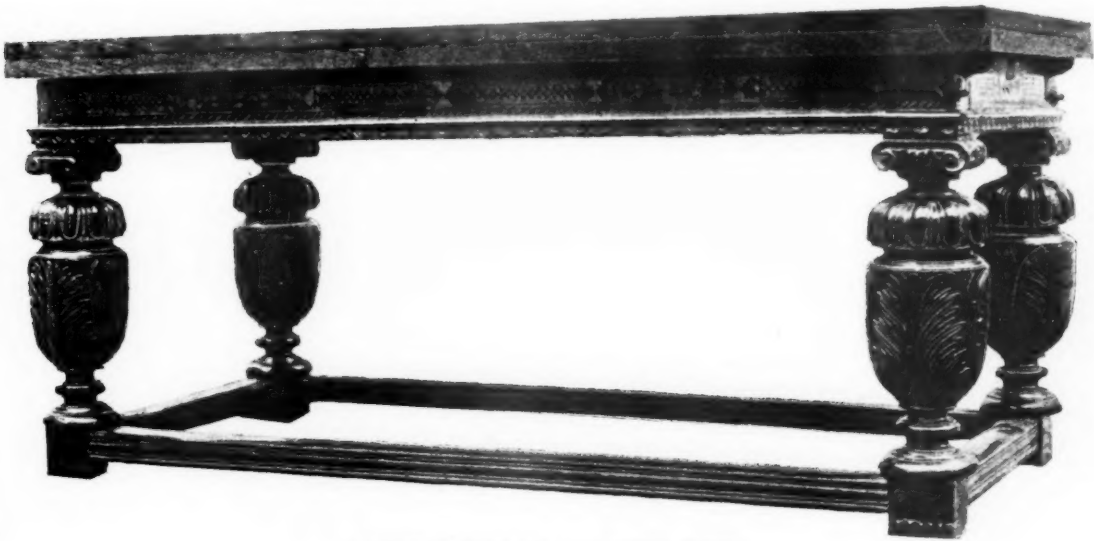
In the early part of the eighteenth century, Sir Christopher Wren had been for some years rebuilding London after the Great Fire, and had gathered around him a school of designers and carvers whose influence upon furniture makers was very marked. It was the age of constructive joinery and beautiful carving, and whether in oak or deal one single style and tradition permeated the whole country.

The broken and curved pediments over doors and chimney-pieces, and the carving of Grinling Gibbons, soon caught the popular taste, and found an echo in the cabinets and furniture of the time. The acanthus leaf, so common upon the knees of the table and chair legs, and the shell on the upper rail of the backs, are both directly borrowed from architectural details; indeed, the scallop shell, so identified with Queen Anne furniture, can be traced back to very early days. It was used in Classic and Renaissance times for the inverted tops of cylindrical niches, for water basins, for fountains, as decorative backgrounds for busts and vases, and was a favourite ornament in later French work and throughout the first quarter of the eighteenth century in this country.

At this time we see how marked was the influence of architecture on interior decoration and furniture; the architect was the chief director in all matters of style, proportion, and arrangement, until a great deal of the actual furniture was designed by him. It is not

too much to claim that the classic spirit, so predominant throughout the furniture of the eighteenth century, is mainly attributable to the influence of architects.

The name of Chippendale first became known about the middle of the eighteenth century, and though his work at the time was but little thought of, yet now it holds almost a unique position. His first book was published in 1754, and in reading it we cannot help admiring the power he possessed of combining the seeming incongruities of the so-called French, Gothic, and Chinese styles which were then so fashionable, and in making out of them pleasing and harmonious pieces of furniture, and imparting to them such symmetry and dignity. We see in his work how all his effect was obtained from outline and carving only, for though inlay, veneer, and painting had long been in use, he discarded them altogether, and worked in the



OAK INLAID DRAWING-TABLE. LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

From Mr. F. S. Robinson's *English Furniture*. By permission of the publishers.

solid mahogany. But he did not, as so many suppose, originate a style; he only carried on the existing traditions of the day and clothed them in fresh detail of his own, or borrowed from other sources.

In his chairs, for which he will always be noted, the broad seat and carved back, which were his strongest features, had been in use in England for more than half a century, and chairs almost identical in outline had been made by unknown men all over the country. His Chinese chairs, based upon the fashion familiarised by Sir William Chambers, with square underframing and rails, are similar in construction to those of the earlier Jacobean period, and show how loth the makers were to lose hold upon the traditions of the past.

At this time the country was full of excellent cabinet-makers, and the taste for everything of the new or French fashion was in the air; and by publishing a book upon work with which doubtless many of his contemporaries were familiar, Chippendale has gained a reputation and notoriety which perhaps is hardly deserved; for though he crystallised the floating ideas of the day and published them as designs, yet he cannot certainly be credited

with their entire originality. It is difficult to get over the fact that it is impossible to identify any of the designs published in his books with executed pieces. That he was a most able craftsman, a superb carver, and a clever and ingenious draughtsman, everyone will admit; but it is open to question whether it is right to attribute to him the originating of the style that now bears his name.

At this period a great many books were published of designs for furniture by both architects and cabinet-makers, all more or less trade catalogues—Mathias Lock, Copeland, Ince and Mayhew, Mainwaring, and many others. These were issued broadcast all over England, and to their influence must be attributed much of the furniture then made; but in country districts it was simplified, and, though following the new fashion, the construction and tradition of the earlier work were much adhered to. Chairs and tables in particular are frequently met with in widely different parts of the country, some plain and others elaborately carved, clearly showing that the same designs and patterns were common property amongst the cabinet-makers of the time, who embellished them or not as they felt inclined. The earlier chairs had claw and ball feet, cabriole legs, and the acanthus leaf, the successor of the shell, upon the knees, and very often the little “forget-me-not” flower—so used by Grinling Gibbons—worked into the back in several places. Towards the middle of the century we find the square legs in favour, and the carving confined almost exclusively to the backs.

Now, whatever we may think to-day of the general design of Chippendale and his fellow-workers, there is no doubt that these famous cabinet-makers thoroughly appreciated the proper limits within which carving, as applied to furniture, should be confined. Lowness of relief, adaptation to the structural lines, the employment of a maximum of plain surface with a minimum of carving, are all strongly marked characteristics of the work of this period. There is nothing to catch or destroy the dress, or projecting to hurt the occupant. Close-grained, hard mahogany was the material almost universally employed; and so the extreme delicacy and fineness of the carving suggest this material alone, and would be impossible of application to oak, as to any of the softer kinds of wood.

I do not want to weary you with an attempt to trace step by step the various changes that took place in the forms and details of furniture at this time, but there are a few men who stand out pre-eminent before their fellows, and who influenced the style of their time to such an extent that I feel constrained to speak of them.

Shearer was one of the first to recognise the value of satinwood, which he used either solid or veneered, and also that of many other rare woods for inlay and marquetry. He, perhaps, was the one man who was not carried away by the prevailing taste for the French style, and kept to his aim of providing good, solid, beautiful furniture for everyday people. His furniture is practical, sensible, and ingenious, and always worthy of admiration.

Heppelwhite may, perhaps, be entitled to be called the originator of a style, as there is a distinctiveness and character about his work, and a pre-eminently English feeling that makes it stand out from that of the many cabinet-makers who were his contemporaries. His work is altogether lighter and less cumbrous than that of Chippendale, and though, perhaps, lacking the power of invention and dignity of appearance so associated with the work of the latter, yet, without doubt, his is the one style that had more to do with influencing the taste of the day than any other. The name will always be associated with the shield and heart-shaped back chairs with the straight tapering legs, and though he occasionally adhered to the now traditional cabriole legs, yet his preference lay for simpler and more direct forms. He also favoured the employment of painted and japanned work to harmonise with the colour and decoration of rooms. The delicately carved husks, feathers, knots and





MAHOGANY CUPBOARD : EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

From Mr. F. S. Robinson's *English Furniture*. By permission of the publishers.

ribands are characteristic of his style, and are found in some form or other in nearly all his pieces of furniture.

Particular mention must be made of the brothers Adam, and of Robert especially, who was, perhaps, as great a designer of furniture as any in the century. The strict formality of Robert's designs can be traced to his classical training, and researches with his brother in Spalatro, and to him must be attributed the credit of having introduced the elegant refinement that marks the furniture of his time. The name of the brothers was so far-reaching that at one time hardly a house of any pretension was built or decorated without their co-operation. With Pergolesi, Cipriani, and Angelica Kauffmann they worked a great deal, and, like other architects, published books of their designs for decorative fittings and furniture, which, without doubt, assisted in educating and forming the public taste of this period. Their furniture was designed not only for the room, but for particular positions in the room; and the fireplaces especially, with the beautiful chimney-pieces, delicately inlaid and exquisitely carved, with their tall mirrors over and attendant girandoles, make most effective pieces of decoration. There is a peculiar airy grace and perfect sense of proportion and fitness about Adam furniture and work that is especially captivating, no doubt attributable to the designers' architectural training.

With Thomas Sheraton furniture, perhaps, reached its acme of delicacy and finish, and sank to nearly its lowest ebb, and it is matter for much reflection that a man who could design such masterpieces as Sheraton should at the close of his career deteriorate to positive ugliness, and pander to the debased taste of the day. In his finest work there is great sincerity and truthfulness; the ornament and decoration is only introduced as part of the expression, and admirable construction and perfect workmanship are always found.

Sheraton worked a great deal in mahogany and satinwood, painted and inlaid, and seldom had recourse to much carving. His ornament is very severe and chaste, chiefly consisting of a combination of classical details, urns, rosettes, festoons, and swags, and his favourite pendent bell flowers. In his earlier work simplicity of outline was one of his greatest characteristics; and however elaborate the decoration, it always formed and looked a part of the furniture, and did not give the impression of being applied merely for the sake of ornament. There is no doubt that his influence was greatly felt throughout the country, even more so than that of Chippendale, and a great amount of refined and quiet work was the result.

The list of eminent furniture makers and designers may be fitly closed with Gillow, whose speciality was inlaying with delicate threads and frets of metal; but his work is not in any way equal to that of his predecessors, and after him furniture designing so rapidly declined that by the middle of the nineteenth century it absolutely ceased to exist as an art.

A few things with regard to furniture stand out pre-eminent in bygone days—the first, that its form and detail were so admirably adapted to the material it was made of; the second, that it always was so singularly suitable to its environment—two facts that mainly contribute to its charm and interest.

How admirably suited was the oaken furniture of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods to its setting of panelled and tapestried walls, low ceiled rooms, and latticed casements; how its quiet colour and severe lines harmonised with its surroundings, and gave just that sense of completeness that was needed to accord with the dress and manners of the day.

Then think, again, of yet a later period—that of the mahogany school of the eighteenth century—a century which stands unrivalled in its production of beautiful furniture. How pleasantly the graceful curves and sinuous lines of the dark wood show up against the white panelled rooms of the Georgian period; nothing could be more suitable to its environment than the delicate yet virile workmanship of Chippendale and his contemporaries, or the pleasing fantasies of Heppelwhite and Sheraton.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the influence of architects in guiding public taste was evidently much greater than now, and the published works and drawings of such men as Inigo Jones, Wren, Chambers, the brothers Adam, and many others, show that the designing of the fittings and furniture came well within the scope of their work. They were not only thoroughly conversant with the planning and arrangement of furniture, but were consulted as a matter of course by their clients, who did not venture to decide such matters without their aid—a great contrast to the feeling with which architects are, I fear, regarded to-day.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, though the design of furniture was still influenced by the architectural features and character of the houses it adorned, it begins to show that the necessity for the two being absolutely in harmony with each other was not considered essential, for a great school of specialists in furniture-making had arisen, and the association between the architect and cabinet-maker was beginning to weaken, until it ceased to exist.

About half a century ago, or even less, a time when perhaps domestic architecture in England was at its lowest ebb, things reached such a pass that the fashion in furniture became absolutely regardless of architectural principles or fitness, and only the idea of comfort and luxury prevailed, until the inevitable reaction set in, and people, finding they could no longer get new furniture which was not an eyesore, perforce reverted to the opposite extreme, viz. the older styles of former days.

Then came the difficulty which still exists—which particular style amongst those of the past to select. All, perhaps, are equally incongruous in modern houses, yet all appeal to people in different ways; and now that in the mind of the general public architecture and furniture have been definitely divorced from one another, it is the fashion for people to pick up pieces of furniture, some Jacobean, some Chippendale, some Sheraton, quite indiscriminately because they happen to be beautiful, quaint, or old, and fill their houses, utterly indifferent to the effect produced.



EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CANE CHAIR.  
In the possession of Mr. Langton Dennis [A.].

All this brings us back to one thing worth noticing—that throughout the periods when architecture flourished and was a living art, furniture was the same, and very beautiful work was the result; but as soon as there ceased to be any real tradition in architecture, so at the same moment furniture died out. The two are inseparable—they always have been and always will be; and just as to-day we have, I firmly believe, a real living common-sense style of domestic architecture, so also, with its development, will a real style of furniture arise. But so long as we have no new furniture to rival the old in beauty, workmanship, and durability, and in keeping with present-day architecture, as well as in accordance with modern requirements, so long will this system of furnishing with old examples, or modern copies of it, continue.



SHERATON SETTEE IN SATINWOOD.

Photographed from the original in the possession of the Misses H. and I. Woolan.

There is undoubtedly a great effort being made at the present time amongst many of our ablest designers and craftsmen to remedy this by producing designs for furniture original and artistic in treatment; but I feel, and I may be entirely wrong, that the reason this movement has not been so successful as it might be, is that labelling their efforts with the hall-mark of "simplicity"—that admirable but much abused term—the feeling of modern furniture is somewhat too archaic and too primitive to appeal to the luxurious age in which we live. It is the old story of the swing of the pendulum—the over-elaboration so conspicuous in the bad styles of our fathers has led many to go to the opposite extreme, and design furniture that is too simple and whose lines are too rigid and severe to combine, as they should do, simplicity, elegance, and comfort. Not only in design but also in material are we too archaic, mahogany giving place to untouched oak; polished woods to raw green stains, and inlaid satinwood to pewter and ash!—furniture, in fact, more suitable to country cottages, or simple and unpretentious houses, and quite unfitted for rooms with any greater claims to decoration or design.

There is still too much inclination in aiming at simplicity of form to neglect the beauties of form altogether. Because mouldings have been excessively or wrongly employed, there is a tendency to abjure them altogether, so losing one of the main factors in creating beauty and interest.

Of course, to class the whole of the modern furniture produced to-day in such a category would be absurd, for we have designers and craftsmen who, if only given the opportunity, can design and make furniture which can rival the productions of past ages. But until there is some settled standard of thought and tradition permeating the whole country, any efforts at design in furniture must be but isolated and individual.

I do not suggest that an architect should design furniture; but he should have in his mind the house he is building, finished and furnished complete, just as a painter has a mental impression of the last state of a picture he may only be beginning to put on canvas. That impression may be modified and improved in detail as the work proceeds, but the general scheme, the broad idea, will remain. For the architect, however, who is more thorough in his work, and is not content with constructing the mere shell of his house, who will try to give his clients the best possible arrangement in his rooms, there is much scope for excellent effects, by planning permanent fitments, such as book-cases, cupboards, side-board, recesses, and so on. There is, I am aware, a prejudice against such things, because, now that furniture removing is so easily accomplished and the love of change so restlessly indulged in, people like to feel that what they have in one house they can take to another, and not leave as a fixture for the next tenants.



CABINET, DESIGNED AND MADE BY MR. CHAS. SPOONER.



In bedrooms, fittings of a certain kind are common enough — carried out, not by architects, but by firms of upholsterers, in any style that happens to appeal to them, or their customers' taste. But that is not quite the sort of thing we want, which must be something essentially part of the architecture, and which will also bear the invisible, but none the less readable, signature of the man who is responsible for the room itself. And it is even more important that this kind of fixed furniture should be designed by the architect than the movable kinds, such as cabinets, tables and chairs, inasmuch as it is more completely part of the house itself.

The British have the world-wide reputation of being an inartistic nation; but one cannot look round at the present day without being struck by the fact that this reproach is being removed, for a great many people have either become artistic themselves or have attained to the wisdom of Socrates in admitting that they know nothing, and are therefore content to leave the work to those whose business in life it is to show them what is artistically right and in good taste. With the improvement in domestic architecture, which is so marked, it will, I feel sure, only be a matter of time before the public realise that good, sensible, modern furniture can be equally well obtained at a reasonable cost; and this result would be greatly helped if architects generally would give more thought and care than they do at present to the finishings and furniture of the houses they design. For though it is impossible, and, I think, unnecessary, that they should emulate the example of the brothers Adam, and design the contents of the house from garret to cellar, yet an architect's training and sense of proportion should enable him to exercise a very helpful power in controlling and directing the taste of the public.

[The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness for photographs and slides kindly lent by Messrs. Methuen, the publishers of Mr. Robinson's *English Furniture*; Mr. A. H. Bullen, the publisher of Miss Constance Simon's book on *English Furniture Designers*; Miss Woollan, Messrs. Langton Dennis, Edgar Wood, C. F. A. Voysey, Chas. Spooner, Arthur J. Penty, Ambrose Heal, Ernest Gimson, Dan Gilson of Windermere, etc., and to the authorities of South Kensington Museum.]

#### DISCUSSION OF THE FOREGOING PAPER.

Mr. LEONARD STOKES, *Vice-President*, in the Chair.

MR. PERCY MACQUOID, R.I., Author of *A History of English Furniture*, said he had been asked at a moment's notice to speak on this subject, but it was very difficult to add anything to Mr. Guy Dawber's admirable Paper. He had given them, in an extremely simple way, a very large grasp of a very large subject, and condensed pretty well all the types known of English furniture into a very small compass. It was extremely difficult in so short a space of time to give, as Mr. Dawber had done, an idea of how one period melted into another; but they had seen by the admirable illustrations on the screen that those links were very perceptible; and that, to his mind, was the great interest in furniture; it was the periods of transition that taught one the past. He should like to have seen a little more of the Elizabethan period, but it was extremely difficult to obtain fine and genuine examples. The court cupboard, for instance—a very important piece of furniture—really comprised every necessity

of the family. The court cupboard shown them was a very old friend of his; and he could tell them a story connected with it. He noticed that court cupboard some years ago, and, although he had the greatest respect for the authorities of the Victoria and Albert Museum, he thought its authenticity was doubtful. He took a note of the date on it, and the workmanship. Some time ago a gentleman in the West of England sent him some photographs of two chairs of the same date and the same touch of the hand as this court cupboard, and asked him to come and look at his furniture. He was so curious to see these chairs that he went down and saw all the furniture. Imagine his horror when he found the hall filled with work of the same kind as the court cupboard and the two chairs! The gentleman pressed him for his opinion about the furniture, and he had to tell him that not one single piece of it was genuine, and gave his reasons for this opinion. The owner told him that he had been getting it

piece by piece during the last fifteen or twenty years. That would be, Mr. Macquoid thought, about the time South Kensington had got the court cupboard. The furniture, his friend went on to say, "came from a family in the North who were greatly reduced in circumstances; and it was all made by the carpenters of the family in the reign of James I." This gentleman had spent a very large sum of money on old furniture. He (Mr. Macquoid) was glad to say that the whole of it had now been returned to "the carpenters of the reign of James I.," and his friend had been able to purchase other and genuine furniture with the money returned to him. One of the most beautiful specimens in oak Mr. Dawber had shown them was the Charterhouse table. That was especially interesting, because it showed the very strong influence of Henri II. and the French style of about 1554 and 1556. Mr. Dawber had mentioned the fact that walnut was used; but walnut was no doubt very extensively used, and some specimens entirely constructed of walnut were made between, say, 1570 and the beginning of the Civil War, and so great an impression had this walnut made upon the people that they evidently planted a succession of walnut trees to make ready for the Restoration of Charles II. These Charles II. people made nothing but walnut furniture. The walnut in the sixteenth century was evidently used as a rather precious thing, for one never finds an inferior piece of furniture made of walnut in Elizabethan or Jacobean times. The date of the Yorkshire chairs—viz. 1620—also seemed a little early, because the interesting split baluster in those chairs was, he fancied, a little later in date. If these were not later, there would be no chairs made between the Restoration chairs and those very distinctively made in 1625, and he could not imagine that a local variety would have sprung up so early as 1620 bearing the split baluster. That split baluster must have come, of course, from Holland through Suffolk, and then got up North. One also missed the very rare and very difficult specimens to obtain of gilt furniture beginning about 1720 and going on to about 1725 and 1730, the taste for which, he should imagine, came in with the Guelphs. It was a very showy sort of stuff, and did not belong, in English feeling, to the rest of our furniture; but at the same time it was very interesting. The knees of the chairs and sofas bore an ornamentation which he was at a loss to account for; and if anybody could inform him what it meant, he should be deeply grateful to them. It consisted of a lion's mask on the knees and an eagle's head on the end of the arms. The lion's mask and eagle's head must have some symbolic meaning, because one found them only in that period and very extensively reproduced, together with an extremely objectionable face—evidently representing somebody of the time, and he should like to know who. He agreed entirely with Mr. Dawber about Chippen-

dale. He was a very able man who did very little that was original, except to refine and make lighter certain forms that existed before him, and to make those forms more practicable and suitable to the costume and appearance of the people who used those chairs; for it must be remembered that when Chippendale began the costumes altogether lightened. Powder came in, and waisted coats. Stockings just then began to turn down and go under the breeches: up to the time of George II. stockings had been rolled over the knee breeches. The whole costume of the first George and Anne was far more clumsy, and the furniture far more suitable to the rather dull and clumsy-looking people who used it. Chippendale began at a far brighter and really more intellectual and gay period, and consequently one found a rather more lively characteristic introduced into his furniture. With regard to the Adams he had nothing to say: Mr. Dawber had shown how very beautiful the Adam furniture was, and how very apt we are, in talking of the merits of Mainwaring, Heppelwhite, and Chippendale, to neglect that of Adam. He was architecturally complete in his structure, and where one found, as Mr. Dawber remarked, Adam in possession of a house—where that house was originally designed by Adam, and the furniture designed by him, and it still remained in its original place, the effect was most beautiful. He should like to mention that there was one particular house in this country, a very beautiful Adam house, where the whole of the furniture of the rooms had never been stirred from its original position—viz. Lord Jersey's house at Osterley. The triumph of inlay to be seen there on the sofas and chairs was remarkable. All the delicate and classical designs were inlaid on the round faultlessly, and not one piece of inlay had started, although the sun poured into the room. With regard to the modern furniture Mr. Dawber had shown them it was most interesting, and he had no doubt that when they found a public who would pay as much as their ancestors had paid for the furniture of which they had just seen photographs, they would produce something respectable. At present it seemed to him that the wood was rather flat, the mouldings were rather flat, and a great many uprights ended in sealed tops and poppy heads, which suggested that clothes should be hung upon them; the hinges were very much larger than they need be; and altogether there was a sense of affectation and bareness that was not attractive. As to *l'art nouveau* he thought it was beneath contempt. It was only the result, he should think, of a person who had lived entirely by himself, who was neglected by society, and who, when he sat down to design furniture, dined off red herrings and absinthe. His aim was to produce something extraordinary, and he thoroughly succeeded in doing it. They had to thank Mr. Guy Dawber for having in a very short space of time given them a very comprehensive view of this interesting subject,

and he begged to propose a hearty vote of thanks to him for his Paper.

MR. J. D. CRACE [*H.A.*] said he had very great pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks to Mr. Guy Dawber for his interesting Paper. He felt still more interested in saying something to thank him, because it was now forty-nine years since his (Mr. Crace's) father had read the first Paper on this subject before the Institute. It was particularly fixed on his mind because he (Mr. Crace) had had a large hand in preparing the diagrams for the Paper. There were many points Mr. Dawber had touched upon that were very interesting, and one might very easily go into detail which it was not desirable to do; but there were one or two things which occurred to him were interesting, and might be called to mind. For one thing, Mr. Dawber had made a little light of the advantage which might be had in tracing furniture, historically at any rate, from the old representations. The illustrations to be found in old manuscripts were by no means exclusively ecclesiastical. Far from it; many of the dedication pages, for instance, in the old books showed the domestic interior of the person to whom the book was presented, and in that way extremely interesting details were often given. Then there were very interesting specimens of furniture scattered about the country in some of the old houses, of even pre-Elizabethan time. He recollected seeing a distinctly original bedstead, which had certainly never left the house since the time of Henry VII., at Cothele, Lord Mount Edgcumbe's place on the Tamar. There was a great mine of interesting furniture at Hardwick Hall. He was sorry Mr. Dawber had not laid a little more stress on the amount of inlay work done in Elizabethan times. Elizabethan furniture was often extensively inlaid. Reference had been made to inlay on the round in the Adams' time, but inlay on the round existed in the most charming way at Hardwick Hall of the time of Elizabeth, and done apparently with a view to Queen Elizabeth's visit to Hardwick. It was on the turned leg of a table which had a sort of complimentary message on the top. There was the Royal device, and the Cavendish arms with the supporters, the two stags, and the wild rose twining between them in compliment to Queen Elizabeth. The verse was to the effect that "The redolent smell of eglantine We stags exalt to the divine"—evidently a compliment to the Queen. Then there was an immense deal of furniture of about the time of William III. in the same house, and especially some extraordinarily fine specimens of the State bed of that period, with great carved canopies covered with velvet and silk, altogether very interesting archaeologically. Knole, of course, was also a most interesting house in the way of furniture. Going through the period of the Georges involved styles of furniture which had been very much scught cut during the last decade or so; but perhaps Mr. Dawber went rather far

in saying that design had already given out in the middle of last century, because he believed it was then reviving very considerably. It began to revive before the Great Exhibition—in fact, the Great Exhibition was the outcome of the sense of a certain number of people of the want of having designs in the accessories of life better understood. But there was a great deal of admirably designed and very well executed furniture produced from 1850 and up to the end of the century. Anybody who could look back upon the horrors that appeared in shops when he was a young man would look now, and, even taking an ordinary shop-front of Tottenham Court Road, think it quite gem-like compared with what existed then. A great deal of the furniture produced by the ordinary furniture makers to-day might not be of a very high quality, or of a very high quality of design, but it had the right intention; it had a right general notion of what design should be, and did not include those abominations of the early half of the nineteenth century. He begged most cordially to thank Mr. Dawber for his Paper. It was very useful to bring this and kindred subjects before the Institute from time to time. Undoubtedly all architects would do better to take a keen interest in the contents of their new houses, whether they designed them themselves, or whether they found somebody capable of designing for them the accessories; because, naturally, they were greatly interested in the effect—and the total result of the interior would always depend to some extent upon the accessories finally occupying it.

MR. MAURICE B. ADAMS [*F.*] said that there was one period in the history of architecture in regard to furniture which had not been alluded to, but which struck him as being extremely interesting. He referred to the time when Mr. Burges and Mr. Street and Mr. Eastlake and Sir Arthur Blomfield were interesting themselves in designing furniture, some of which was extremely good, and which—especially that of Mr. Burges—ought to have some recognition if they were to show the work that nowadays was generally associated with the Arts and Crafts School. In Mr. Burges' house in Kensington—which he should like to see acquired as a national monument, because it really was a most wonderful piece of uniform design, thoroughly worked out from beginning to end by one of the most distinguished architects of the nineteenth century—in that house, and also in his offices at Buckingham Street (from which many pieces were removed to his house subsequently), he carried out the idea, which William Morris and Rossetti and Burne-Jones also realised, that one can have perfectly plain furniture, and can enrich it with the most beautiful painting both inside and out, and make it extremely interesting, and a supreme work of art. Mr. Burges in his house, acting on the lines of the painted mediæval *armoire* at Bayeux, decorated a series of bookcases in his library, beginning A. was the Architect, B.

was the Builder, and so on, all round the room. He employed in doing this Stacy Marks and Sir E. Poynter. Inside this furniture he painted most delightful representations of plant life—all part and parcel of the story. Burges, to his mind, lifted furniture to a higher plane even than the exquisite cabinetwork the work of Chippendale and others. Whether it was desirable to paint chairs and suchlike articles subject to hard usage, where the painting was liable to be worn off, was another matter; but, in bringing the history of furniture up to the present time, as Mr. Dawber had done, it would be a pity if we left out of our mind such work as that which belonged to the now much abused period called the Gothic revival. There was some very nice inlaid work at that time by Bruce Talbert; and Brydon followed on much in the same way. They were friends, and Scotchmen both of them—and between them they did some extremely nice work, which would bear criticism even from the present standpoint. There was very much more intelligent individuality in it, and very much more thought, than there was in some of the semi-barbaric rabbit-hutches which we see with huge iron hinges, &c., and interiors extremely difficult to get at and of very little use. This was a subject he (the speaker) had taken a great interest in all his life; perhaps he had been inspired principally by the writings of Mr. Eastlake, who was so long associated with the Institute. Some years ago, when his friend Mr. Aldam Heaton read a Paper on furnishings in that room, the subject was rather disparaged by some members of the Institute as being a matter which architects nowadays had no time usefully to turn their attention to. He thought that was a great mistake. When one goes into some of the delightful modern houses which architects are building all over the country, where they have been allowed to have a voice in furnishing the houses they have designed, the result is extremely satisfactory, and must be a great delight to the owners who were well advised enough to allow their architects to have a voice in the matter. On the other hand, one goes into other houses of this class where is to be seen some of the most atrocious furniture that is possible to be introduced, and the incongruity of which in such houses is painfully evident. In the designing of furniture, as in the fitting up of our homes, it must be remembered that the people who use them ought not to appear incongruous with them. Mr. Macquoid had brought out most correctly that it was not only the architecture of the period which influenced furniture, but also the costume and style of the people who used it. He had known Mr. Dawber a good many years, and he remembered the first time he met him was when he showed him some sketches he had made of furniture in East Anglia. He was not surprised to find he was still interested in the subject. He wished to join in thanking him very heartily for the concise and

extremely interesting way in which he had brought the matter before them.

MR. H. D. SEARLES WOOD [F.] said he knew how much Mr. Burges's house was appreciated, and if he might suggest it, it would be a very charming object for a visit during the coming Congress if it could be arranged. There were several other houses which had equally interesting furniture and decorations in them which could be added to the list if such a visit were contemplated. Mr. Guy Dawber had not referred to Owen Jones's work. In Carlton House Terrace there was some very interesting furniture and decorative work.

MR. ARTHUR PENTY said that it always appeared to him, although he did not know that one should be severely critical about old furniture, that very little of it was entirely satisfactory. One would see a chair the legs of which were beautiful but the back of which was weak. The earlier work was vigorous, but there was a lack of refinement about it. Then in the later work there was refinement, but the vigour was gone. One felt, too, that the same standard of design never appeared to have been maintained in furniture as had been maintained in architecture.

MISS ELEANOR ROWE, referring to Mr. Macquoid's allusion to the spindle ornamentation as being rather too early at 1620, asked if Mr. Dawber would give them its earliest date according to his observations. In Nash's *Mansions of England* there was a drawing of the Montacute room with the interior porch—about 1580—and the spindle ornamentation was given in it.

THE CHAIRMAN, in putting the vote of thanks, said he was sure they had all very much appreciated Mr. Dawber's Paper. It was a subject he (the Chairman) was very much interested in. He liked collecting old things, but he did not pretend to understand when they were made or who made them. It was very interesting to hear Mr. Dawber's experience, and they were all grateful to him for giving them the benefit of his knowledge.

MR. GUY DAWBER, in reply, said he had to make an apology, because he felt that in undertaking to read a Paper on furniture he ventured on far too big a subject. It was quite impossible to trace properly the history and evolution of furniture in half an hour or so, as the subject was so vast and covered such an enormous ground. Hardwick Hall he knew well and also the furniture, much of which he had sketched, but it was impossible to touch upon matters like the inlay and painted work here in the time at his disposal. He could not quite agree with Mr. Macquoid in what he said about the split baluster on the chairs. He (Mr. Dawber) had two remarkably fine Derbyshire chairs which had these split balusters and turned drops, and he had always dated them at about 1610 to 1615, and at present his researches had not led him to any other conclusion but that they were of this date.



9, CONDUIT STREET, LONDON, W., 24th Feb. 1906.

## CHRONICLE.

### Election of Fellows, 5th March.

The Council direct the attention of members to the following statement:—

In compliance with requisitions in writing duly signed according to the provisions of By-law 9, the election of the twenty-eight candidates for Fellowship nominated by the Council for election at the Business Meeting on the 5th March will be taken by voting papers.

The Council are aware that these requisitions proceed from a widespread feeling that the Institute should avail itself of the permission granted by Clause 3 of the Charter to declare that every person desiring to be admitted a Fellow shall be required to have passed such examination or examinations as may be directed by the Royal Institute.

Sympathising with this feeling the Council adopted it as their policy in 1904, and at a Special General Meeting held on the 29th February 1904 a resolution was passed to the effect that after the 31st December 1906 no person shall be admitted a Fellow unless he is either an Associate or has passed the examination or examinations qualifying him as an Associate.

On the same evening, however, the General Body passed the following Resolution:—

"That during the intervening period (*i.e.* till the 31st December 1906) every architect eligible under the Charter for election who desires to join the Institute as a Fellow be encouraged to do so."

In consequence of these resolutions becoming generally known in the profession a large number of eligible candidates have come forward during the last two years. The Council are convinced that it is to the interests of the Institute that thoroughly qualified architects in various parts of

the country whose age and busy practice preclude them from entering for examinations should become Fellows before the door is for ever closed against them.

At the same time the Council have subjected the qualifications of candidates during the last two years to the same careful scrutiny and inquiry as has been their practice during the whole existence of the Institute.

To avoid any possible misapprehension the Council declare that the last election of Fellows under the existing system will be on the 3rd December 1906.

In view of the requisitions for a poll the Council think it right that members should be reminded of the above facts; and as one adverse vote in four excludes, they desire to direct the attention of members to the gravity of their responsibility when they fill up their voting papers.

By order of the Council:

ALEXANDER GRAHAM, *Hon. Secretary.*

W. J. LOCKE, *Secretary.*

### Proposed Site for new Institute Premises.

Mr. Leonard Stokes, *Vice-President*, who in the absence of the President through indisposition was Chairman of the Meeting of the 19th inst., in bringing the proceedings to a close referred to the Special General Meeting which had been summoned for Tuesday, the 20th, when the following Resolution was to be moved on behalf of the Council:—

"That the Institute do purchase the freehold site between Nos. 11 and 13 Portland Place, London, at the price of £19,500, and do erect thereon a building to include the Offices and Hall of the Institute at a total cost including the purchase of the said site and for the erection of the said building. And that the Council be authorised to raise by the sale of Stock belonging to the Institute and by Mortgage of the said site and building on terms to be approved by the Council such money not exceeding in the aggregate the sum of £53,000 as may be necessary for the purpose of the purchase of the site and the erection of the building."

Mr. Stokes stated that certain considerations had arisen with regard to questions of ancient light and other matters which would necessitate the Council's further deliberation of the scheme. The Council had therefore determined at their meeting that afternoon to adjourn the Meeting. As, however, there was no time to issue notice of adjournment in the usual way, the Meeting would be held, but a motion for adjournment only would be brought forward.

The notice thus verbally given prevented the attendance of all but a very few members who were ignorant of the altered arrangements. The Chairman (Mr. Leonard Stokes), the Hon. Secretary,



and a few members of Council were present; but as the quorum required by the by-law was not constituted by half-past eight, the Meeting fell through altogether.

#### The Registration Sub-Committee: Statement.

The Registration Sub-Committee, consisting of the President, Sir Aston Webb, R.A., Mr. Edwin T. Hall, Mr. T. E. Colcutt, Mr. John Slater, Mr. J. S. Gibson, Mr. A. W. S. Cross, Mr. W. H. Seth-Smith, and Mr. George Hubbard, and appointed by the Registration Committee "to take evidence for and against the principle of Registration and to suggest the course of procedure to be adopted at the General Meeting when the present scheme of Registration comes up for discussion," desire to state for the information of members that they have held twelve meetings and taken the *viva voce* evidence of twenty-one architects practising in London and the provinces, a verbatim report of which has been preserved, and they hope soon to be in a position to report to the Registration Committee.

#### Greenock (Cartsburn School) Competition.

The Secretary has been in correspondence with the promoters of this competition, the Greenock Burgh School Board, respecting the rate of the architect's commission for carrying out the work—stated in the conditions to be 3½ per cent. As the Board decline to increase the commission, members of the Institute are requested to refrain from taking part in the competition.

#### Rural Building By-laws.

In the Report of the Rural Building By-laws Committee, read recently before the Central and Associated Chambers of Agriculture, the Committee stated that the admitted hardships which occurred at the present time were due to the fact that some local authorities who had adopted the by-laws of 1877 had, either through a misunderstanding of their powers neglected, or from the mixed character of their district found it difficult, to avail themselves of the 1901 by-laws. The authorities working under the 1877 by-laws had no option but to enforce vexatious restrictions, and the fault lay not so much with the local authorities as with the by-laws with which they had saddled themselves. Out of 668 rural authorities there were seventeen whose by-laws were not based on any model series, and were made before the issue of the first model in 1877. There were 283 who had adopted the 1877 by-laws, and 138 working under those of 1901, whilst there were still 246 who had adopted no by-laws at all. In the opinion of the Committee that was not a desirable state of things. They could see no reason why the whole country should not be administered under one uniform system, provided such a system were made sufficiently

elastic. To encourage the erection of cheap and suitable dwellings for agricultural labourers, and at the same time to protect communities which were gathered together in comparatively small areas of land, they required a great deal of elasticity, a quality not to be found in the existing by-laws. No possible readjustment, either by amending Acts or by administrative powers, could ever place the matter on a permanently satisfactory footing. An entirely new building code was necessary. The Committee therefore suggested that a Royal Commission or Departmental Committee should be appointed to inquire into and report on the subject. This body might consist of an official from the Board of Agriculture and the Local Government Board, and representatives of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Institution of Civil Engineers, Surveyors' Institution, Central Chamber of Agriculture, Land Agents' Society, and the Rural District Councils' Association. The Commission should be directed to frame one comprehensive code of by-laws, so as to make them equally and automatically applicable to the following classes of buildings: (1) Isolated buildings, (2) buildings partly isolated, (3) buildings in villages, and (4) buildings in towns. Special powers in a new building code should be given to local authorities with reference to exemption, and the principle of a Court of Appeal, such as was to be found in the London Building Act, should also be embodied.

#### Greek and Roman Sculpture.

An interesting lecture on "The Development of Sculpture in Greece and Rome" was delivered by Mrs. E. Burton Brown at the London Institution on the 5th inst. The lecturer dealt with the development of the spirit of Greek art, and touched on that of Rome, illustrating the general principles on which one system and style of art grew into another. The characteristic of Greek art, she said, was generally described as being ideality, and that of Roman art of realism, and these words were right if one understood what they meant; but they each raised so many interpretations that one had to be careful about them. What it really came to was that the Greek artist was a great creator, and the Roman artist was not. The Greek artist never sat himself down before a single man or woman's form, or before any scene or in the front of people with the intention of copying or imitating them. That to him was not the nature of art at all. He was a creator and an originator, and he was always working from within upwards, and he made a new thing every time he set out to make a statue or relief. He earnestly watched the moving figures of men and women in order that he might know what attitudes and what beautiful lines each one of them took, and then he made something which was more beautiful than what he had actually seen. If one did not do that it was difficult to say

what was the use of having art at all. As Whistler put it: "All the elements of beauty are already existent in the world outside; the artist is born to select and choose." Greek art was ideal, therefore, because it dealt with ideals, and strove to create types, and was not merely a copy of existing forms. Roman art was exactly the opposite to that. The Roman was a great maker of history, but he was never a great artist, and perhaps the two hardly ever went together. The Roman was content to imitate actual forms; to make a speaking likeness of the people he saw. In the difference between the two lay the whole difference between two opposite ways of looking at art. They saw in the very beginning, when the Greeks had bad tools and hard stone, and no knowledge of anatomy, and the greatest difficulty in mastering their materials, how they were then striving to make something that, of their own inherent consciousness, was really beautiful. In the period after the Persian wars they began to make very beautiful but still rather stiff and broad, solemn, strong figures, and the fifth century was one when the ideal was strength and dignity. In the fourth century they had greater command, and then tools and materials and the far greater knowledge of anatomy enabled them to make statues with far more effect in repose and freer in line, and, as it were, less dignified, less solemn, and less finer perhaps. They were equally ideal, but the ideal was a new one, and was an ideal of delicate beauty and grace rather than of majesty and solemnity. Then they got to what were called Hellenistic times, and there they found that the old Greek model was changed, and the old Greek style was modified by various infusions of different foreign ideas. Lastly, they came to Rome itself, where the Roman sculptors, living in a city crowded with splendid masterpieces of the old Greek days, longed to imitate Greek forms, but were themselves always filled, more or less, with their own realistic tendencies, so that Roman art was Hellenistic in a sense.

#### Competitions in America.

At last month's convention of the American Institute of Architects, the following suggestions were brought forward by the special committee dealing with the subject of competitions:—

1. The object of the competition should be to secure the most skilled architect as shown by the schemes which he presents.
2. An architectural adviser should draw up the programme, and advise the owner in relation to technical questions in making the programme, selecting the scheme and the architect.
3. The amount to be expended on the work should be sufficient within a reasonable margin to erect a structure of the character and size indicated in the programme, or there should be no cost price stipulated.
4. The programme should be in the form of a contract which guarantees the employment of the successful com-

petitor to make the drawings for and supervise the work of the proposed structure at a proper remuneration.

5. All competitors who have notified the owners of their entering the competition should meet and, after discussion with the owner, agree upon conditions which will be binding upon the owner and the competitors.

6. Payment of competitors in a limited competition should be guaranteed sufficient to cover the preparation of the drawings demanded, and prizes or premiums in open competitions to cover such expense for at least the five best schemes.

7. The minimum amount of drawings should be required to express the design and arrangement.

#### The Liverpool Architectural Society and Liverpool Improvements.

Following the discussion on the Paper by Mr. T. T. Rees [F.] on "Architects and City Improvements," read before the Liverpool Architectural Society, the following resolution was adopted:—  
"Having regard to the commercial importance and prosperity of the city of Liverpool, this members' meeting of the Liverpool Architectural Society considers the appearance of the city should be worthy of such commercial greatness, and should express its own dignity. This meeting realises that this is only to be done by the combined efforts of all our worthy citizens. It therefore suggests to the Council of this city the advisability of having a committee to deliberate as to the best means of obtaining that end."

#### The Concrete Age.

In view of the increasing interest in the uses of concrete for building and engineering work, a journal is to be brought out bi-monthly under the title of *Concrete and Constructional Engineering*. The first number will appear in March with the following articles among the contents:—"The Advent of the Concrete Age," by Lieut.-Colonel J. Winn, R.E.; "Steel Skeleton Construction and the London Building Act," by W. Noble Twelvetrees, M.Inst.M.E.; "Reinforced Concrete Foundations of Buildings," by Charles F. Marsh, M.Inst.C.E.; "The Setting of Portland Cement" (Serial): Article I., by Cecil H. Desch, D.Sc., Ph.D.; "The Preservation of Iron and Steel against Corrosion," by B. H. Thwaite, C.E.; "Safeguards against Freezing in Concrete Construction"; "New Uses for Concrete: Railway Sleepers"; "Tests with Concrete: Adhesion of Steel; Fire Resistance." The new venture is to be about the size page of the *Nineteenth Century*, and will be published at a shilling.

#### Records of Roman Remains: Comm. Boni's Appeal.

Mr. John Hebb requests us to state that the translation of the appeal by Comm. Giacomo Boni printed in the *JOURNAL* of the 10th February (pp. 195-6) was not made by him, but by Mrs. Herringham, the wife of Dr. Herringham, of Wimpole, and a contributor to the *Burlington Magazine* and other art periodicals of the day.

## JOHN POLLARD SEDDON.

Born 19th September 1827; died 1st February 1916.

I did not know John P. Seddon till 1880, when I entered his office in Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, as an improver, so that I cannot speak of him at the time when his chief designs were made, notably, the Castle Hotel (afterwards The College, Aberystwith) and the competition design for the Law Courts and for the Government buildings in Whitehall; but having known him then, and knowing these designs, it is not difficult to imagine the spirit and enthusiasm that conceived them, and the way in which he worked into them the best part of himself. His enthusiasm for his art was immense, sometimes perhaps carrying him away from the mere utilities of life, but never allowing him to lose his sense of artistic fitness in what he did.

Articled to Professor Donaldson in 1847, he was thus brought up in a strictly classic atmosphere, though his very earliest work shows that his sympathies were from the first with the Gothic revival. Nevertheless, the breadth of treatment which his best work shows is probably accounted for to some extent at least by this early classic training; as may well be also the columnar form of Gothic which he made his own—an absolutely original form, though owing something also to his love and study of Venetian Gothic, but as distinct from the one as from the other in minor details and sentiment. He was, in fact, far the most original of the Gothic revivalists; for though among the strongest in his love for and belief in the revival, he was always a modern rather than a medievalist, even though he himself might not altogether have been willing to admit it; and in his work almost alone among the early revivalists was it impossible to trace the origin of the detail to any particular medieval style or building.

In this respect he was certainly before his time. While others were content to produce copies more or less of ancient detail, he went deeper and sought to look behind at the reasons that prompted medieval form, and to produce what a medieval designer would have done if living in the seventeenth century with the knowledge, historical and constructional, then available.

Like many others of the revivalists, he was a facile draughtsman and rapid worker, not only in his architectural drawings, but in his water-colour drawings of architecture and scenery. Some of his early drawings, more especially those of Venice, which were carried to a high state of finish, were extremely beautiful—full of atmosphere and colour.

Of all his designs, probably that of the Law Courts was really the finest. Never thoroughly understood, it would have been better appreciated now than it was at the time of its production.

It was in many respects evolved from his Aberystwith design, but was broader in treatment without losing any of the richness of detail of his largest executed work. Had it been carried out it would certainly have been the most original building in modern London, and I think I may say the finest, from a spectacular point of view at least. His notion of a great record tower was fine in the extreme, and its vast simple lines, combined with the scale on which the whole design was conceived, would have made London the richer. It would have been better for the architecture of our towns had his ideas of breadth and unity of treatment been more general.

Cardiff.

J. COATES CARTER.

## REVIEWS.

## SOME ARCHITECTS AND THEIR WORKS.

*Studies in Architecture.* By Reginald Blomfield, A.R.A., F.S.A., M.A. Oxon., Author of "A History of Renaissance Architecture in England." 8s. Lond. 1905. Price 10s. net. [Messrs. Macmillan & Co.]

The resuscitation of these half-dozen slightly connected essays, which Mr. Blomfield has collected from the *Quarterly Review* and the *Architectural Review*, and entitled "Studies in Architecture," results in an informing book which may be perused with profit by any intelligent reader, but especially by the professed student of architecture. Excepting the first essay, it is a book mainly about architects—certain architects as personalities seen through their architecture and their writings. To find the man in his architecture seems, according to the author, to be the problem for the critic. "After all," he says, "the vital interest of architecture is the human interest." To this point he addresses himself, aiming at recalling the fact that "architecture is a difficult art . . . not a mystery, but an expression of the human intelligence . . . capable of the same critical analysis as any other imaginative and intellectual effort." For shortcomings in this endeavour he pleads "the limited opportunity possible to a writer whose principal work lies elsewhere."

Amongst the fifty illustrations are ten reproductions of sketches from Mr. Blomfield's own pencil, delightful in drawing and masterly in their handling, but, unfortunately, not all equally happy in surviving the ordeal of process reproduction. Some twenty more of the plates are from photographs, most of them excellent for their purpose. As an architect, treating of architecture, the author is somewhat chary of plans—and still more so of sections for illustrating his subject. Sketches and general views, however excellent and however well they may appear to suffice for the sympathetic

amateur, are not quite what we expect a specialist to rely on to the extent that Mr. Blomfield does for elucidating his ideas in matters architectural. There are illustrations given that could be spared to afford room for plans and sections. The use of explanatory scale-diagrams is so peculiarly the architect's means of laying open for inspection and investigation the work of architects, so as to be read by students of architecture, that one is tempted to wish the author had adopted it more freely in this case—if only by way of example—and to regret that he had not more obviously and directly addressed himself to professed students of architecture. So far as the general reader is concerned, this is but one more added to the class of interesting but non-indispensable books on architecture. Addressed with more serious intent to architects, as experts in building-work, it might be put into a higher category altogether; for it contains lessons that need to be driven home to architects in particular, and can be rightly enforced only by the authority of an architect.

The first essay, entitled "Byzantium or Lombardy," opens with the remark that "modern architecture seems incapable of progress except in a circle." Having exhausted our classical tradition and got over our devotion to Gothic architecture, we now see men transferring their studies to the obscure period of post-Roman architecture "which preceded the art of mediæval Europe." Each of the various Italian writers on this subject seems to have been directing his best efforts to demolishing the work of his predecessors, besides being too fond of theorising without consideration of the buildings themselves, summing up, so to speak, before mastering the evidence; a failing, one might observe, not rigidly confined to Italian book-writers on architectural history. One recent writer, Signor Rivoira, with patriotic zeal propounds the theory that Western architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (generally known as Romanesque) is descended in unbroken continuity, through the work of Italians—presumably Lombards—at Ravenna in the fifth century A.D., from the architects and builders of Imperial Rome; that it was in fact the creation of Italy, not of Byzantium. As for Byzantine-looking features and details found at Ravenna, these may have been executed by Greeks working for local designers and builders; a theory which appears to Mr. Blomfield "entirely to miss the very real and far-reaching difference between Byzantine architecture and Romanesque, a diversity in kind that there is between S. Vitale and S. Apollinare Nuovo." He finds in Signor Rivoira's work "too little attention given to plan and construction. It is here that the hand of the amateur is apparent; for architecture is a difficult subject, and this aspect of it can only be handled by architects." And, further, he says: "To my mind the vital distinction between styles and periods in architecture is to be found, not so much in details

as in planning and construction, in the underlying thought. We do not find any such principle of classification laid down in Signor Rivoira's work. In his anxiety to find the origin of mediæval architecture in Italy, he claims a single origin for the basilica plan of the Western church and the totally different plan of the domed church of the East." "The remains of the classical architecture of Rome were the common property of the heirs of the Roman Empire. What was not common property was the tradition of constructive skill which the Byzantines alone seem to have preserved." "He has yielded to the temptation to magnify the modest achievements of the Italian and of the Lombard by claiming for them some share in the discovery of that great constructional system, devised by the ability of the Greeks, of which St. Sophia is the most magnificent expression." "It is one of the tragedies of the history of architecture that the great achievement was never followed up, and that the architecture of Western Europe, with the exception of a few isolated efforts, proceeded along the lower lines laid down by the Lombard builders." "Roman architecture in the West died with the Roman Empire; but in the East the legacy of Rome passed into the hands of men capable of developing it to the utmost—men who did, in fact, evolve from it a new type of architecture, probably the most truly original that the world has ever seen."

The author notices, as a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Byzantine art, the work on St. Sophia, by Messrs. Lethaby and Swainson. A brief account of this building follows; and here, at least, one would think, some light might surely have been thrown by means of a scale-plan and section to supplement Mr. Fulton's two perspective sketches.

Another great church built by Justinian at Constantinople was that of the Holy Apostles, now destroyed. From it are derived the five-domed churches of St. Mark at Venice and St. Front at Périgueux. S. Vitale, Ravenna, was probably a Byzantine copy, from a church at Antioch, of Constantine's, according to Mr. Blomfield. One has been accustomed to hear of its near relationship to Justinian's church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople. As good examples of later developments in Byzantine architecture the churches of the monastery of St. Luke of Stiris are quoted, illustrated in the fine monograph by Messrs. Schultz and Barnsley.

"The real achievement of these Byzantine Greeks," says Mr. Blomfield, "was not in their decorative detail, beautiful though this was, but in their mastery of constructional form, their power of handling great masses of building—a power inherited from the Roman builders, yet transported by the finesse and subtlety of Greek genius into the fairland of poetry." "The architectural forms used are actually the constructive forms. There is no

concealment behind Orders and other devices of revived classicism, none of that torturing of stone . . . which makes a great deal of later Gothic ridiculous." "Even as regards Roman architecture itself there still appear to be lingering misconceptions. It has been too much the habit to assume that Roman architecture was merely a tame reproduction of Greek. . . . This does not go to the root of the matter. The Roman was a born architect, in the sense of what is most vital in architecture, for he was a born constructor; and it was out of this strong constructive sense that a new architecture was developed—an architecture that eliminated ornamental forms, and worked out an abstract system of design from the materials to hand." Thus does our author get at the root of the matter. "Good architecture," he adds, "is not arrived at by violent efforts to be original, nor by the repudiation of knowledge. If architecture is again to become an art with assured vitality, it must dispense with the unessential, and address itself to the task of finding the absolutely best expression for the constructive necessities of a building. This is the lesson to be learnt from Justinian's architects."

This first essay, going as it does into matters which lie behind so much that was yet to come in the story of architecture, East and West, seems to exceed in interest and real importance all the remaining five essays put together, notwithstanding the more strictly personal interest in them, which counts for so much with Mr. Blomfield. To come down directly to Andrea Palladio, Philibert de l'Orme, George Dance, jun., and the rest is just a little damping, at first. Of the first-named the author says: "What the student wants to know is Palladio's place among architects, how he came to occupy the position in history that he does, what were the sources from which he drew his inspiration, and the genesis of his individual methods of thought and design." Of architects generally: "One wants to know and understand their antecedents, the labours of their predecessors which became their heritage, the intellectual atmosphere of the time which made them possible at all; and this is, in fact, the function of historical criticism." Calling attention to the historical untrustworthiness of Palladio's drawings of Roman antiquities, Mr. Blomfield remarks that "he was an exceedingly skilful architectural draughtsman," and "he gratified the taste of the time by restorations of the buildings he represented. . . . One would willingly exchange the whole set of Palladio's restored antiquities for a dozen trustworthy measured drawings of the buildings as they were when he saw them." "In England, at any rate, the work of this architect should be introduced to students with very great care and all sorts of limitations, for at recurring intervals Palladio has been a sort of Old Man of the Sea to the art of architecture. There is assuredly a good deal of

chance in reputations. . . . Palladio was certainly happy in his opportunity. His fame rests partly on his writings and partly on his architecture." In his book "there is a large parade of learning . . . and then there is that uncomfortable habit of advertisement." "With the touch of pedantry that suited the times and invested his writings with a fallacious air of scholarship, he was the very man to summarise and classify, and to save future generations of architects the labour of thinking for themselves. After the days of the intellectual giants came the schoolmaster to put everything in order." \*

Unfortunately Inigo Jones "fell headlong into the arms of this teacher." Would that he "could only have come under the influence of Peruzzi or Sanmichele instead." "Fortunately Wren did break away from Palladianism"; and a dead set was made against him in consequence by the younger generation, abetted by Lord Burlington, the amateur. Wren "became the great architect he did, because he was in fact a great constructor."

In such manner does the author bring things home to us, investing his story with that personal interest which touches us closely.

"The Architect of Newgate," Geo. Dance the younger, is described as being an artist of some natural gifts, highly trained and accomplished—not a genius, elected early in life one of the original forty Royal Academicians. Nevertheless he produced a masterpiece, afterwards lapsing into the mere practitioner. In designing Newgate Prison "he had to get some architectural quality out of a gigantic wall . . . he attacked his problem squarely . . . and produced what was perhaps the finest abstract expression of wall-surface to be found in Western architecture." "So much was done with so little." His pupil, Soane, having to design another place of safe custody, viz. the Bank of England, sought, by a curious inversion of ideas, to obtain his effect "by devices that included a number of sham door and window openings; in other words, by means of the very architectural feature which the conditions of his problem forbade him to use." Mr. Blomfield can only offer, as a reasonable explanation of Dance's fine design, the theory that he had come, when travelling in Italy, under the spell and personal influence of Piranesi, whose etchings of architecture, including the seventeen extraordinary "Carceri" plates, had been published only a few years before. "With all their traces of insanity, these seventeen drawings struck a note undreamt of hitherto, one that the great draughtsmen of the Renaissance, with all their scholarship and passion for the antique, had missed; for it was as if Piranesi had thought himself back into the spirit of the

\* The race of pedants in architecture did not die out with Palladio. Probably to them and their writings we in our times have largely owed the rise and fall of our so-called Gothic Revival.



builders of the baths and aqueducts that he drew, and had penetrated to the Roman's secret, that the highest quality of architecture is found in mighty building."

The three remaining essays treat of the art of the French Renaissance—and of some of the men who left their mark thereon—chiefly of the sixteenth century, "perhaps the most interesting period in the whole of French history." "The history of this period has yet to be written," as we might equally well say of our English architecture prior to the sixteenth century.

After noting that there is evidence of a reaction from Viollet-le-Duc's "histrionics—history on the smallest possible basis of evidence"—Mr. Blomfield continues: "The study of architecture suffers much from the want of clear definitions. We talk of the Renaissance, but the Renaissance may mean very different things." \* "In France, as in England, the first fifty years of the Renaissance were occupied with experiments in the details of ornament; but the difference is that, whereas in England the Italian influence disappeared at the death of Henry VIII. . . . in France the development of architecture proceeded steadily to its full maturity, with the result that, historically, France got a start of some fifty to seventy years—a lead which that country has never lost. The man who contributed most to this result was Francis I., 'un amateur du premier rang,' as M. Dimier calls him."

"Where his predecessors merely looked" in their Italian expeditions, "Francis considered and learnt. Moreover, throughout his life he had the rare advantage of the guidance of his sister, Margaret of Navarre, 'la perle des Valois,' one of the most attractive minds of the sixteenth century; . . . and perhaps it would not be too much to say that what was best in the French Renaissance was due to the sympathy and intelligence of Margaret quite as much as to the direct initiation of her brother." At Fontainebleau, which was destined to become the cradle of modern French art, he started work with the famous "Devis," or Report, of 1528, and carried it on under a succession of Italian masters, such as Il Rosso, Pellegrino, Serlio, and Primaticcio, most of them carvers and ornamentalists rather than architects, strictly speaking. On the accession of Henry II. a Frenchman, Philibert de l'Orme, appeared on the scene as "architecte du Roy." "De l'Orme," says the author, "was the first and most complete realisation of the modern architect in France, as distinguished from the master-mason of the middle

ages." "He in fact finally did away with the older method of building; for the happy-go-lucky practice of the master-mason he substituted the modern system of working to scale-drawings." "Modern French architecture dates from Bullant and De l'Orme." "The conception of an architect as a man who devoted his life to the design and construction of buildings, and who was only qualified to do so after serious and prolonged training, hardly existed before the middle of the sixteenth century." "It was only by slow degrees that the conception of an architect as an artist of exceptional knowledge and capacity established itself, and De l'Orme, in insisting again and again on the necessity of thorough training for an architect, had very good reason for doing so in the vague opinion and incompetent practice of his time." There is something about this contention of De l'Orme's which sounds most curiously up to date. Also very much to the point is the counsel he offers, in his great work on architecture, published in 1567, "as the result of more than thirty-five years' experience." "He has noticed the folly of people who, instead of consulting an architect, go to a carpenter, or painter, or notary, and spend the rest of their time in finding out their mistake; whereas the right thing to do is to call in your architect, give him a free hand, and not insist on his copying old buildings. The architect on his part is to be learned in mathematics, philosophy, and history, and is to be a staid, sensible, temperate man of affairs . . . and is to be careful in the selection of his clients." Truly a golden maxim!

WALTER MILLARD.

## MINUTES. VIII.

At the Eighth General Meeting (Ordinary) of the Session 1905-06 held Monday, 19th February 1906, at 8 p.m.—Present: Mr. Leonard Stokes, *Vice-President*, in the Chair, 36 Fellows (including 11 members of the Council), 38 Associates (including 2 members of the Council), 1 Hon. Associate, and several visitors—the Minutes of the meeting held Monday, 5th February 1906 [p. 199], were taken as read and signed as correct.

The following members attending for the first time since their election were formally admitted by the Chairman—viz. Francis Albert Whitwell, *Fellow*, and Charles Joseph Thompson, *Associate*.

A Paper on FERNITURE having been read by Mr. E. Guy Dawber [F.] and illustrated by lantern slides, the subject was discussed, and a vote of thanks, moved by Mr. Percy Macquoid, R.L., and seconded by Mr. J. D. Crace [H.A.], was passed to Mr. Dawber by acclamation.

Announcements re the Special General Meeting summoned for the 20th February and the Special and Business Meetings of the 5th March having been made from the Chair, the proceedings closed, and the Meeting separated at 10 p.m.

\* So, too, we talk, without definition, of "Romanesque" and "Gothic," of "Early English," "Decorated," or "Perpendicular," and other puerilities in nomenclature, mainly of nineteenth-century concoction, employing these adjectives, as is now the fashion, to serve as substantives.

